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IRAN DECEIVES INTERNATIONAL NUCLEAR INSPECTORS, U.S. SAYS

United States issues formal statement to IAEA board of governors

The United States has accused Iran of concealing its nuclear activities from international inspectors trying to determine whether Iran is developing nuclear weapons.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has compiled a "startling list of Iranian attempts to hide and mislead, and delay the work of IAEA inspectors. It is clear that Iran has continued to deny inspectors the transparency and cooperation they need to perform their duties," said Ambassador Jackie Wolcott Sanders in a statement to the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna March 2.

Sanders is the U.S. ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and the special representative of the president for the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons.

Despite a pledge to suspend production of uranium tetrafluoride, a key ingredient in the enrichment process, Iran continued its production at the Uranium Conversion Facility (UCF) in Esfahan, Iran, Sanders said.

Citing information released by IAEA Deputy Director-General Pierre Goldschmidt, Sanders enumerated what the United States considers to be Iran's infractions of its nonproliferation commitments. For example, she said Iran continued to conduct quality-control tests on

a variety of centrifuge components despite an agreement to suspend assembly, installation, testing or operation of gas centrifuges.

“Given Iran’s history of clandestine nuclear activities and its documented efforts to deceive the IAEA and the international community, only the full cessation and dismantling of Iran’s nuclear fissile material production can begin to give us any confidence that Iran is no longer pursuing nuclear weapons,” Sanders said.

Sanders said the board of governors cannot ignore forever its responsibility to report Iran’s noncompliance with its nonproliferation commitments to the U.N. Security Council.

The United States “would expect the Board to convene immediately to consider appropriate action if there is any further deterioration of Iran’s adherence to its suspension pledge,” Sanders said.

On March 1, White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan said the United States is in full agreement with Britain, France and Germany on the need to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

The three European countries have launched an initiative known as EU-3 to begin negotiations with Iran aimed at achieving a permanent resolution of the Iranian nuclear challenge.

“We support the efforts of our European friends to get Iran to abandon its ambitions for a nuclear weapon,” McClellan said. “[W]e’ve been talking with them about the best way forward to strengthen their diplomatic efforts.”

UNITED STATES SEEKING WAYS TO SUPPORT EUROPEAN TALKS WITH IRAN

Syrians “need to make maximum effort” against terrorists, Rice says

President Bush is considering a number of possibilities to support European negotiations with Iran, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in an interview in London March 2 with NBC News.

Regarding the February 25 terrorist attack in Tel Aviv, Israel, Rice said that “Palestinian Islamic Jihad, operating in Syria, had advance knowledge of the attacks” and that Syria must either close down the operations of both the Palestinian rejectionist groups and Iraqi insurgents operating from Syria, “or the Syrians are going to continue to have to answer for what’s going on in their territory.”

On Iran and its suspected pursuit of nuclear weapons under the cover of a civilian nuclear program, Rice said President Bush has not yet made any decisions on precisely how the United States might support the European talks with Iran. “The most important thing,” she said, “is that the Iranians need time to understand that they are the ones that need to perform.”

“The real issue is what the Iranians are prepared to do. But, of course, the United States wants very much to support what the Europeans are doing,” she said. “We’ve said we support the diplomacy, that this issue can be resolved diplomatically if there is a common front -- and that is what the President is looking at.”

The secretary said the United States and Europe are designing a common strategy “so that Iran knows there is no other way.”

Regarding Syria, Rice said the degree of Syrian complicity in the terrorist attack in Tel Aviv remains unknown. “But one has to say that this is a direct result of Syria allowing these kinds of groups to operate on its territory.”

“What we need from the Syrians is maximum effort, not a little bit here and a little bit there They need to make a maximum effort on the Iraqi insurgency, they need to make a maximum effort to get these Palestinian rejectionist groups out of their territory, and they need to make a maximum effort to conform with the requirements of Resolution 1559, which requires the withdrawal from Lebanon.”

Rice participated in the interview in London the day after attending a conference on Palestinian security and government reform.

NEW SENATE BILL WOULD STEP UP PRESSURE ON GENOCIDE IN DARFUR

Darfur Accountability Act would raise sanctions, support for African Union

By Matthew Pritchard
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington - In a continuing effort to bring pressure to bear against the Sudanese government to stop the ongoing violence in Darfur, two U.S. senators introduced a bill March 2, the Darfur Accountability Act, that would renew U.S. and multilateral sanctions against those responsible for the atrocities.

Senators Jon Corzine (Democrat of New Jersey) and Sam Brownback (Republican of Kansas) put forward the bill as a follow-up to a resolution they pushed through the Senate in July 2004. That measure declared the atrocities in Darfur to be genocide and called for appropriate diplomatic action, including sanctions. The House of Representatives and former Secretary of State Colin Powell drew the same conclusions about the region.

Despite public outcry and months of sanctions against the Sudanese government for its support for the Jingaweit militias, Corzine said, the atrocities in Darfur have continued.

This ongoing violence and genocide in Darfur, he said, "is really, at least from my perspective, probably the single largest moral challenge of our time. It is absolutely essential that we respond to it."

Citing a report released by the nongovernmental organization Human Rights Watch that documented "new accounts of rapes, torture and mutilation," Corzine related how "eyewitnesses told investigators that in December and January, government-backed Jingaweit militia attacked villages in an area of Darfur called Labado and singled out young women and girls for rape."

The United Nations recently announced that even though atrocities are taking place in Darfur, they do not formally consider it genocide.

But to Senator Brownback, "there is no longer any excuse. We must call this what it is, and we must act to prevent any further pillaging and death."

When Senator Corzine visited Darfur in August 2004, he noted that the threat of sanctions against the Sudanese

government was having an effect in Khartoum. However, he said, since that time the United Nations has not followed through on imposing sanctions and the situation in the region has only gotten worse.

"It is time for us to send a different signal to Khartoum," Corzine said. "Sanctions should be applied now. We need to keep the pressure on the government of Sudan."

In addition to applying U.N. sanctions and reiterating that the events in Darfur constitute genocide, the bill calls for an extension of the arms embargo to include the Sudanese government and for faster assistance to the understaffed African Union (AU) military force that is trying to maintain peace in the region.

In September 2004, Corzine, along with Senator Michael DeWine (Republican of Ohio), helped secure passage of an amendment that provides \$75 million to assist AU peacekeepers. Although the money has been allocated, it has yet to be distributed. The new bill, Corzine said, would help to accelerate the process.

"We need to get troops on the ground now," Corzine said. "We need to get assistance to the AU now. If they need better equipment, better transportation, technical assistance, or intelligence, then that should be provided."

The Darfur Accountability Act has bipartisan support. Democratic senators Christopher Dodd and Joseph Lieberman, both of Connecticut, Richard Durbin (Illinois), and Russ Feingold (Wisconsin) were joined by Republicans Jim Talent (Missouri) and DeWine (Ohio) as co-sponsors of the bill with Corzine and Brownback.

UNITED STATES OUTRAGED AT ABUSES BY U.N. PEACEKEEPERS IN AFRICA

Senior State Department official testifies before congressional panel

The United States is "outraged" at the abuses, sexual exploitation and involvement in human trafficking by certain United Nations forces charged with maintaining the peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a senior State Department official told Congress March 1.

Kim Holmes, assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs, told the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Organizations in the U.S. House of Representatives that more must be done by the United Nations to ensure that these abuses, which have recently come to light, do not happen again.

Holmes was called to Capitol Hill to brief the subcommittee on the latest developments with regard to U.N. peacekeepers as part of the mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo known as MONUC (U.N. Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo).

While calling the reported abuse reprehensible, he reminded the subcommittee that the vast majority of U.N. peacekeepers “carry out their duties honorably under dangerous and difficult conditions. Some of them, such as the nine peacekeepers from Bangladesh who were killed in the Congo on February 24, make the ultimate sacrifice.”

The United States strongly supports the United Nations’ stated policy of zero tolerance for sexual abuse by peacekeepers and is pressing the organization to make sure this policy is implemented, he said. “We expect full accountability for the abuses that have come to light in the mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (or MONUC) and other U.N. missions,” he added.

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